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take the lead in suggesting an exploration of the North Polar region, Dr. Petermann, whose numerous writings on this subject have formerly met with so much attention, shows that the easiest and shortest line of research by which the North Pole can be reached is by Spitzbergen. But though this is his favourite scheme, and it was long ago (and before steam-navigation) the plan of Parry and Sabine, Dr. Petermann would rejoice if either of those expeditions could be set on foot by the British nation, whether by Baffin's Bay and the west of Greenland, or by Spitzbergen. Before these communications are read, I have great satisfaction in announcing that the Council of the Royal Society thus express their opinion as to the scientific results to be attained by such an exploration as that which has been suggested by Capt. Sherard Osborn :—

“ ‘The President and Council do on this occasion desire to take the opportunity of stating their full persuasion that the expedition now contemplated by the Royal Geographical Society might, by proper arrangements, be rendered highly advantageous in the advancement of several branches of physical science.’

“ Thus fortified by the good will of the Royal Society, the Council of our own body have resolved to appeal to other scientific Societies of the metropolis, expressing the hope that they will unite with us in urging Her Majesty's Government to fit out such a scientific expedition as will redound to the honour and reputation of England, will once more bring into active service those Arctic surveyors whose deeds have obtained for them the highest estimation both abroad and at home, and will further inspire and instruct young naval officers, who, if they live till the year 1882, will be thus rendered competent to conduct astronomers to the best sites for observing, in the Antarctic region, the transit of Venus which will then occur.”

The first Paper was—

1.—*On the Origin and Migrations of the Greenland Esquimaux.*

By CLEMENTS R. MARKHAM, Esq., Secretary R.G.S.

Mr. MARKHAM began by saying that the proposition for a North Polar Expedition had touched a chord which vibrated through the hearts of the countrymen of Drake and Raleigh with answering sympathy. Amongst the scientific results which would flow from such an expedition, not the least important were those connected with the distribution of the tribes of Esquimaux. Throughout the most desert wastes of the explored part of the Arctic Zone are found abundant traces of former inhabitants; where now all is a silent solitude were found ruined stone dwellings, bones of animals cut

with flint instruments, and so forth. These remains extend pretty nearly in a line from west to east; and there were strong grounds for believing them to mark the halting-places of tribes of Esquimaux in their migrations from Northern Siberia to the more genial western shores of Greenland. Nine centuries ago, so far as our knowledge extends, Greenland was untenanted by a single human being—its first inhabitants being the little colony of hardy Norsemen, led by Eric the Red, in the end of the tenth century. For three centuries and a half the Norman colonies continued to flourish undisturbed by the presence of indigenes, and upwards of 300 farms and villages were built along the shores of the fiords. All at once, in the middle of the fourteenth century, a horde of Esquimaux appeared on the extreme northern frontiers of these Norman settlements, and a war of extermination commenced, the result of which was the extinction of the Norman race in these parts—nothing remaining when the site came to be examined, in the last century, but a few Runic inscriptions, ruins of buildings, and broken church-bells. The Esquimaux race remained in possession from Disco to Cape Farewell. Mr. Markham maintained that these Northern or Greenland Esquimaux, as they are without boats, could not be descendants of the tribes inhabiting the opposite American coast; and, for the same reason, could not have crossed the stormy seas from the eastward. It was therefore extremely probable that they were a branch of the same migratory hordes whose traces are left along the icy zone between Northern Greenland and Siberia. During the centuries preceding their first reported appearance in Greenland there was a great movement among the people of Central Asia. Togrul Beg, Genghis Khan, and other chiefs of less celebrity, led vast armies forth to conquest; and the land of the Turk and the Mongol sent forth a mighty series of inundations which flooded the rest of Asia during several centuries. The pressure caused by these invading waves on the tribes of Northern Siberia drove them still further to the North; and this led to the enforced migration of numerous tribes which then tenanted these icy shores, and traditions of which have been preserved by Wrangell. The ruined *yourts* still found on Cape Chelagskoi mark the commencement of the long march which ended only on the shores of the open waters on the Greenland coast. If this theory be correct, this unknown part of the Arctic Zone should be occupied either by a continent or a chain of islands; and there is some evidence to show that this is the case, for Wrangell was informed that a mountainous and inhabited land existed to the north of Cape Chelagskoi; and Admiral Kellett, in the *Herald*, sighted an extensive and high land to the north and north-west of Behring Straits. The emigrants probably kept marching

steadily to the eastward along and north of Barrow Straits, and doubtless arrived in small parties throughout the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries. As new relays arrived they may be supposed to have separated in parties to the north and south; the former wandering whither we know not, the others descending by the shores of Smith Sound. How far these migratory bands, having thus reached their easterly limit, may have wandered northward towards the Pole, is a matter still to be investigated; and this, together with the modes of life of these northernmost tribes of men, analogous to those of the ancient races of Europe, was one of the numerous scientific points on which light may be thrown by the proposed Polar expedition.

The second Paper was entitled—

- 2.—*On the proposed Expedition to the North Pole.* A Letter addressed to SIR RODERICK I. MURCHISON, K.C.B. By Dr. AUGUSTUS PETERMANN, Hon Corr. Mem. R.G.S., Gotha.

SIR—I very much rejoice to see that Arctic research is to be renewed by British explorers, and that the subject brought forward by Captain Sherard Osborn has been taken up by yourself and the Royal Geographical Society. Now that most of the mysteries of the interior of Africa and Australia have come to light, the greatest geographical problems that remain to be solved are the geography of the Central Polar Regions, and the attainment of the Poles themselves; and it is my conviction that the English nation, before all others, is destined, or at least is in the best position, to achieve this, the great crowning triumph of the discoveries on our planet.

The remarks I beg to submit to you, and to the attention of British geographers, on the paper of Captain Osborn, and the discussion thereon, as contained in the report of your proceedings (Slip of Meeting of the Royal Geographical Society of 23rd January, 1865, published 6th February) received by me this day, are for the purpose of advocating the selection of the Spitzbergen route instead of Smith Sound. Having recommended this direction for Arctic research for the last 13 years, I refer to some of my former publications on Arctic geography generally,* and confine myself on this

* 1. The Arctic Expeditions. ('Athenæum,' 17th Jan., 1852, pp. 82, 83.)

2. Plan of Search proposed by Mr. Petermann: Letter to Admiral Sir Francis Beaufort, 23 Jan., 1852. (Parliamentary Papers, 'Arctic Expeditions,' 1852, pp. 142—147.)

3. On the Passage into the Arctic Basin, a communication to Capt. Mangles, R.N., Feb., 1852. (Capt. Mangles' 'Arctic Searching Expeditions, 1850-1852,' pp. 72-75.)

4. Notes on the Distribution of Animals available as Food in the Arctic Regions. ('Journal of the Royal Geographical Society,' vol. xxii. pp. 118-127.)